

The Parties Who Should Decide The SMF Routing

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Each fiscal year, the federal government spends billions of dollars on state transportation projects. Several decades ago, the federal government decided it wanted some party in each State to be responsible for the transportation planning for specific areas. The Governor of Arizona designated the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) to be the official transportation planner for the Phoenix metropolitan area, including tiny parts of adjacent counties.

On June 23, 2006, The Arizona Republic published an editorial that supported the desire of some nondescript entity for the west end of the new South Mountain Freeway (SMF) to connect with I-10 at 55th Avenue, rather than at the point where Loop 101 connects with that major east-west conduit of interstate and intrastate traffic. For lack of a control on the County's population growth, the Town of Buckeye, alone, has given land developers rights to house at least another halfmillion new residents living west of the north-south White Tank Mountain range.

Approximately half of those new Buckeye residents, plus all of the new residents who will live in Goodyear and Avondale, will use 1-10 as their east-west route, the only direct route to and from downtown Phoenix and Sky Harbor International Airport.

Who is accountable for the decision that directs the mutual north-south traffic flows of Loop 101 and the SMF onto several miles of I10? Did the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) make that decision? According to a threedecadesold federal directive that still controls who does regional transportation planning, I understand ADOT does not have the authority to make such a decision.

The MAG was designated this region's planner.

So, when did the Regional Council of the MAG vote on the point where the SMF is to connect with I-10? Such a configuration would put a substantial volume of regional north-south traffic flows onto 1-10. Visualize the flows of that north-south traffic zig-zagging on I-10 in both directions between Loop 101 at 99th Avenue and the SMF at 55th Avenue.

Planning just one part of the SMF at a time makes no sense. Traffic flow on each mile of that highway depends upon its entire routing.

Furthermore, it appears that an independent Indian Nation not only could benefit from "new business traffic" that could use the SMF but also could take a tremendous amount of east-west "through traffic" flows out of Ahwatukee. There are two reasons why Native American transportation planners should be working closely with the MAG planners.

Their common objective is to reduce the guaranteed overwhelming traffic congestion and air pollution of the not too distant future.